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RUINED CITIES IN AMERICA.



SCULPTURED IDOL IN THE RUINS OF COPAN.

RUINED CITIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO.

No. I. REMAINS OF ANCIENT STRUCTURES IN CENTRAL AMERICA.

1. INTRODUCTION.

Awful memorials, but of whom we know not !
Time was they stood along the crowded street,
Temples of Gods ! and on their ample steps
What various habits, various tongues, beset
The mighty gates for prayer and sacrifice !
All silent now !
How many centuries did the sun go round,
While, by some spell rendered invisible,
Or if approached, approached by him alone
Who saw as though he saw not, they remained,
As in the darkness of a sepulchre,
Waiting the appointed time ! — ROGERS.

We have frequently directed the attention of our readers to those monuments of antiquity which are scattered over various parts of the Old World*, the relics of communities far advanced in the arts of refinement, and inhabiting cities once populous and flourishing, but now ruined and desolate. These monuments are to the historian, what the fossils which we dig out of the bowels of the earth are to the geologist, witnesses to be questioned respecting bygone ages and races, that have left no other record of their existence. The contemplation of these relics of the past is as improving as it is interesting; and although the honest inquirer may sometimes, from his imperfect knowledge of the language spoken by these messengers from the dead, misinterpret the tidings with which they are intrusted, yet the mind is invigorated by the pursuit of truth even when the chase is unsuccessful; and he may be cheered by the reflection that any error arising from his ignorance will vanish before the researches of succeeding investigators, while the truth which he discovers will remain permanent and unshaken.

We propose in the present Supplement to give some account of the remains of ancient cities in what is called the New World; cities which have remained buried in the wilderness for ages, unvisited except by the wandering Indian, or the scarcely wilder animals that prowl in the pathless forest.

2. ORIGIN OF AMERICAN CIVILIZATION.

About three centuries and a half have elapsed since the existence of America was made known to the inhabitants of the Eastern hemisphere. From that period to the present time, vast numbers of books have been written about the New World, but little has been done to dispel the darkness which broods over its early history. We have some accounts of the discoveries and conquests of the Spaniards; but from the sixteenth century to our own times, the conquerors seem to have been jealous of giving any information respecting the regions under their dominion, which included those parts of the continent that were inhabited by the only nations of the aborigines who were found in the possession of the arts of civilized life. From ignorance of the monuments which still exist to attest that the population of these parts of America was, at some period, far removed from a state of barbarism, authors have very generally been inclined to treat the glowing accounts given by the Spaniards of the splendour of Peru and Mexico, and the civilization of the inhabitants, as coloured by that spirit of exaggeration of which travellers are proverbially accused. From the same cause, it is only of late years that the architectural remains of the native Americans have been thought of, as likely to afford a clue to the much agitated question of the origin of that people; a question on which so many strange hypotheses have been broached by different writers, and one, into the intricacies of which we have no intention of entering. But without doing so we may safely assume that the Western continent was most probably peopled originally by emigrants from the Old World, who crossed over the narrow sea which divides the north-eastern shores of Asia from the north-western of America; while the arts of

civilization were either carried with them, or subsequently diffused over parts of the country by strangers from some nation in a higher state of improvement, driven perhaps by tempests over a wide expanse of ocean. We ascribe the superiority of the people who were found in the regions which embrace Mexico and Peru, over the natives of America, to knowledge derived from a foreign source, rather than from their own origination, because we do not believe that man is capable of raising himself from a state of complete barbarism, by his own unassisted powers. All nations appear to have been indebted to strangers for the first impulse towards civilization, as if the torch had been in the first instance kindled from above, and afterwards passed round the world, from one people to another.

3. RECENT RESEARCHES.

The celebrated Humboldt was the first who, in the present century, drew the attention of Europe to the monuments reared by the labours of the native races of America. We some time ago presented to our readers accounts of the pyramid of Cholula*, and of the city of Mexico†, in which we availed ourselves largely of the information furnished by that great traveller. More recently, discoveries have been made of cities, buried in almost impenetrable forests, containing evidences of having once been the abode of communities which had made considerable progress in the liberal arts. Some of these situated in the Mexican States, have formed the subject of illustrated works by Captain Dupaix and Lord Kingsborough; and others in Central America were examined by Colonel Gallindo, under a commission from the government of that country. The latest account of these interesting objects is contained in Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, from which work are copied the illustrations of our present number, and we are also indebted to it for the bulk of the information which we proceed to lay before our readers.

Mr. Stephens, an American gentleman already favourably known to the public, by his work entitled *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land*, was in 1839 intrusted with a confidential mission from the government of the United States to that of Central America. During his visit, the country was convulsed by civil war; and such was the abyss of anarchy into which it was plunged, that he found no acknowledged government with which to communicate. His embassy was therefore fruitless as an affair of state, but he took the opportunity of travelling about the country; and, being accompanied by Mr. Catherwood, an artist, he has been enabled to illustrate his published account of the journey with numerous engravings of the interesting objects they beheld. The regions visited are comprised within that comparatively narrow part of North America, extending from the southern shore of the Gulf of Mexico to the Isthmus of Panama; regions which formerly constituted part of the Spanish Dominions, but which are now divided between the United States of Mexico and those of Central America, with the exception of the British settlement in the Bay of Honduras, and some independent territories of Indians. Within this tract of country are situated the ruined cities of which we propose to give some account. The erection of these cities has generally been ascribed to some race more ancient than that which inhabited the country at the time of the Spanish conquest.

4. EARLY ACCOUNTS OF COPAN.

In the district now known as the state of Honduras, one of the most fertile valleys of Central America, are found, buried in the woods, on the left bank of the Copan river, numerous pyramidal structures and monuments of stone. The early Spanish historians mention a place named Copan, situated in the same tract of country in which these ruins are found, which then existed as an inhabited city, and offered resistance to the Spanish arms. This place was con-

* The following are some of the papers alluded to:—

The Pyramids, see Vol. I., p. 137;

Cavern Temples and Tombs, see Vol. II., pp. 161, 249;

Egyptian Antiquities, see Vol. IV., pp. 184, 185;

Thebes, see Vol. VIII., pp. 42, 62;

Architecture, Vol. XVI., pp. 121, 200; Elgin Marbles, pp. 217, 233.

* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. V., p. 175;

† See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. VI., pp. 48, 122,

quered by the officers of Pedro de Alvarado, but we have no account of the particulars of its original capture. In the year 1530 the Indians of the province attempted to free themselves from the yoke of the Spaniards, but submitted after several sanguinary battles, to Hernando de Chaves, who was sent to subdue them. As the cacique of Copan, one of the largest, most opulent, and most populous cities of the kingdom of Guatimala, had been active in endeavouring to throw off the yoke of the conquerors, it was determined to punish him, and his city was therefore assailed. The attack lasted a whole day, and the Spaniards were forced to retreat. Chaves, having been informed that in one place the depth of the ditch, which formed part of the defences of the town, was but trifling, renewed the assault on the next day. The battle continued without advantage to either party until a brave horseman leaped the ditch, and his horse dashing violently against the barrier, the earth and palisades gave way, and a breach was effected, through which the Spaniards entered, and the city was taken. The cacique fled, and after an unsuccessful attempt to recover the ground he had lost, finally retreated, leaving Copan to its fate.

Huarros, the historian of Guatimala, says, "Francisco de Fuentes, who wrote the *Chronicles* of the Kingdom of Guatimala, assures us that in his time, that is, in the year 1700, the great circus of Copan still remained entire. This was a circular space surrounded by pyramids about six yards high, and very well constructed. At the bases of these pyramids were figures, both male and female, of very excellent sculpture, which then retained the colours they had been enamelled with, and, what was not less remarkable, the whole of them were habited in the Castilian costume. In the middle of this area, elevated above a flight of steps, was the place of sacrifice. The same author affirms that at a short distance from the circus there was a portal constructed of stone, on the columns of which were the figures of men, likewise represented in Spanish habits, with hose, and ruff around the neck, sword, cap, and short cloak. On entering the gateway there are two fine stone pyramids, moderately large and lofty, from which is suspended a hammock that contains two human figures, one of each sex, clothed in the Indian style. Astonishment is forcibly excited on viewing this structure, because, large as it is, there is no appearance of the component parts being joined together; and though entirely of one stone, and of an enormous weight, it may be put in motion by the slightest impulse of the hand."

From 1700 till 1834, when the ruins were examined by Colonel Galindo, there is no account of the place having been visited by any traveller.

5. THE CITY OF COPAN.

Omitting the remarks, we can hardly call them arguments, of Colonel Galindo, in support of his hypothesis that America was the cradle of the human race, and that from thence population and civilization spread over Asia, we extract his account of the facts which he witnessed.

"The city of Copan extended along the bank of its river a length of two miles, as is evidenced by the remains of its fallen edifices: the principal of these was the temple, standing at the eastern extremity of the city, and built perpendicularly from the bank of the river to a height of more than forty yards. It is two hundred and fifty yards long from north to south, and two hundred yards broad; stone steps lead from the land sides to the elevations above, and again descend to a square in the centre of the edifice, twenty yards above the level of the river. Through a gallery, scarcely four feet high, and two and a half broad, one can crawl from this square through a more elevated part of the temple overhanging the river, and have from the face of the precipice an interesting view.

"Among many excavations, I have made one at the point where this gallery comes out into the square. I first opened into the entrance of the gallery itself, and digging lower down I broke into a sepulchral vault, whose floor is twelve feet below the level of the square. It is more than six feet high, ten feet long, and five and a half broad, and lies due north and south according to the compass; it has two niches on each side, and both these and the floor of the vault were full of red earthenware dishes and pots. I found more than fifty, many of them full of human bones packed with lime; also several sharp-edged and pointed knives of chaya, (a brittle stone, called *itzli* by the Mexicans,) and a small head, apparently representing Death, its eyes being nearly closed, and the lower features distorted. The back of the

head is symmetrically perforated by holes; and the whole is of most exquisite workmanship, cut out or cast from a fine green stone, as are also two beads I found in the vault, with quantities of oyster and periwinkle shells brought from the sea-shore. There were also stalactites taken from some cava. All the bottom of the vault was strewed with fragments of bones, and beneath was a coat of lime on a solid stone floor."

6. HIEROGLYPHICS.

"There are seven obelisks still standing and entire in the temple and its immediate vicinity, and there are numerous others, fallen and destroyed, throughout the ruins of the city. These stone columns were ten or eleven feet high, and about three broad, with a less thickness. On one side are worked, in *basso-relievo*, human figures standing square to the front, with their hands resting on their breasts; they are dressed with caps on their heads and sandals on their feet, and are clothed in highly adorned garments, generally reaching half way down the thigh, but sometimes in long pantaloons. Opposite the figure at a distance of three or four yards, is commonly placed a stone table or altar; the back and sides of the obelisk generally contain phonetic hieroglyphics in squares. Hard and fine stones are inserted in many obelisks, as they, like the rest of the works in the ruins, are of a species of soft stone, which is found in a neighbouring and most extensive quarry. There is one very remarkable stone table in the temple, two feet four inches high, and four feet two inches square; its top contains forty-nine square tablets, of hieroglyphics, and its four sides are occupied by sixteen human figures in *basso-relievo*, sitting cross-legged on cushions carved in the stone, and bearing each in their hands something like a fan or flapper. Monstrous figures are found amongst the ruins; one represents the colossal head of an alligator, having in its jaws a figure with a human face, but the paws of an animal; another monster has the appearance of a gigantic toad, in an erect posture, with human arms and tiger's claws. On neighbouring hills, to the east and west, stand two obelisks containing hieroglyphics alone, in squares. These obelisks (like the generality of those in the city) are painted red, and are thicker and broader at the top than the bottom. Mounts of stone, formed by fallen edifices, are found throughout the neighbouring country."

Colonel Galindo and Mr. Stephens agree in believing that the hieroglyphics which are inscribed on these monuments, would, if deciphered, reveal much of the history of the people who executed them. When Cortez invaded Mexico, the natives informed Montezuma of his arrival by drawing and forwarding to the capital, a representation of the Spaniards, their ships, arms, &c. This sort of picture-writing is the simplest mode of recording events. But the Mexicans generally used a more artificial method, namely, a system of hieroglyphics analogous to those of Egypt, and probably like the latter compounded of symbolical and phonetic characters. As a familiar illustration of these two classes, let us suppose that to express the idea of Eternity we represent a serpent with his tail in his mouth; this is a symbolical figure. But if we have to inscribe a name, *Henry* for instance, and for this purpose should draw a hen and an ear of rye, we resort to one species of phonetic characters, or those which have no other resemblance than that of sound to the ideas for which they stand. The alphabets of the civilized world are composed of a greatly improved system of phonetic characters. May we hope that some future Champollion or Young is destined to elucidate the long-buried hieroglyphics of America?

7. ART OVERGROWN BY NATURE.

Attracted by the account of Colonel Galindo, Mr. Stephens, accompanied by Mr. Catherwood, went in quest of the ruins. They procured an Indian guide to conduct them to the place, and the following is Mr. Stephens's description of what they beheld.

"We entered the woods, Jose clearing a path before us with a matchete; soon we came to the bank of a river, and saw, directly opposite, a stone wall, perhaps a hundred feet high, with furze growing out of the top, running north and south along the river, in some places fallen, but in others entire. It had more the character of a structure than any we had ever seen, ascribed to the Aborigines of America, and formed part of the wall of the ancient city of Copan.

"It was of cut stone, well laid, and in a good state of

preservation. We ascended by large stone steps, in some places perfect, and in others thrown down by trees which had grown up between the crevices, and reached a terrace, the form of which it was impossible to make out from the density of the forest in which it was enveloped. Our guide cleared his way with his matchete, and we passed, as it lay half buried in the earth, a large fragment of stone elaborately sculptured, and came to an angle of a structure with steps on the sides, in form and appearance, so far as the trees would enable us to make it out, like the sides of a pyramid."

8. AN IDOL.

"Diverging from the base of the pyramid, and working our way through the thick woods, we came upon a square stone column, about fourteen feet high and three feet on each side, sculptured in very bold relief, and on all, four of the sides, from the base to the top. The front was the figure of a man curiously and richly dressed, and the face, evidently a portrait, solemn, stern, and well fitted to excite terror. The back was of a different design, unlike anything we had ever seen before, and the sides were covered with hieroglyphics. This our guide called an 'Idol,' and before it at a distance of three feet, was a large block of stone, also sculptured with figures and emblematical devices, which he called an altar. The site of this unexpected monument put at rest, at once and for ever, in our minds, all uncertainty in regard to the character of American antiquities, and gave us the assurance that the objects we were in search of were interesting, not only as the remains of an unknown people, but as works of art, proving like newly-discovered historical records, that the people who once occupied the Continent of America were not savages. With an interest, perhaps stronger than we had ever felt in wandering among the ruins of Egypt, we followed our guide, who, sometimes missing his way, with a constant and vigorous use of his matchete, conducted us through the thick forest, among half-buried fragments, to fourteen monuments of the same character and appearance, some with more elegant designs, and some in workmanship equal to the finest monuments of the Egyptians; one displaced from its pedestal by enormous roots; another locked in the close embrace of branches of trees, and almost lifted out of the earth; another hurled to the ground, and bound down by huge vines and creepers; and one standing, with its altar before it, in a grove of trees which grew around it, seemingly to shade and shroud it as a sacred thing; in the solemn stillness of the woods, it seemed a divinity mourning over a fallen people. The only sound that disturbed the quiet of this buried city, were the noise of monkeys moving among the top of the trees, and the cracking of dry branches broken by their weight. They moved over our heads in long and swift processions, forty or fifty at a time, some with little ones wound in their long arms, walking out to the end of boughs, and holding on with their hind feet or a curl of the tail, sprang to a branch of the next tree, and, with a noise like a current of wind, passed on into the depths of the forest."

9. AN AMERICAN PYRAMID.

"We returned to the base of the pyramidal structure, and ascended by regular stone steps, in some places forced apart by bushes and saplings, and in others thrown down by the growth of large trees, while some remained entire. In parts they were ornamented with sculptured figures and rows of death's-heads. Climbing over the ruined top, we reached a terrace overgrown with trees, and, crossing it, descended by stone steps into an area so covered with trees that at first we could not make out its form, but which, on clearing the way with the matchete, we ascertained to be a square, and with steps on all the sides, almost as perfect as those of the Roman amphitheatre. The steps were ornamented with sculpture, and on the south-side, about half-way up, forced out of its place by roots, was a colossal head, evidently a portrait. We ascended these steps, and reached a broad terrace a hundred feet high, overlooking the river, and supported by the wall which we had seen from the opposite bank. The whole terrace was covered with trees, and, even at this height from the ground, were two gigantic ceibas, or wild cotton-trees of India, above twenty feet in circumference, extending their half-naked roots fifty or a hundred feet around, binding down the ruins, and shading them with their wide-spreading branches. We sat down on the very edge of the wall, and strove in vain to penetrate

the mystery by which we were surrounded. Who were the people that built this city? In the ruined cities of Egypt, even in the long-lost Petra, the stranger knows the story of the people whose vestiges are around him. America, says historians, was peopled by savages; but savages never reared these structures, savages never carved these stones. We asked the Indians who made them, and their dull answer was *Quien sabe? Who knows?*"

10. A NEARER VIEW OF COPAN.

The following is given as the result of a more careful survey of the ruins:—

"The extent along the river, as ascertained by monuments still found, is more than two miles. There is one monument on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of a mile, on the top of a mountain two thousand feet high. Whether the city ever crossed the river, and extended to that monument, it is impossible to say. I believe not. At the rear is an unexplored forest, in which there may be ruins. There are no remains of palaces or private buildings, and the principal part is that which stands on the bank of the river, and may, perhaps, with propriety be called the temple.

"This temple is an oblong inclosure. The front or river wall extends on a right line north and south, six hundred and twenty-four feet, and it is from sixty to ninety feet in height. It is made of cut stones, from three to six feet in length, and a foot and a half in breadth. In many places the stones have been thrown down by bushes growing out of the crevices, and in one place there is a small opening, from which the ruins are sometimes called by the Indians Las Ventanas, or the Windows. The other three sides consist of ranges of steps and pyramidal structures, rising from thirty to one hundred and forty feet in height on the slope. The whole line of survey is two thousand eight hundred and sixty-six feet, which though gigantic and extraordinary for a ruined structure of the Aborigines, that the reader's imagination may not mislead him, I consider it necessary to say, is not so large as the base of the Great Pyramid of Ghizeh.

"Near the south-west corner of the river wall and the south wall is a recess, which was probably once occupied by a colossal monument fronting the water, no part of which is now visible. Beyond are the remains of two pyramidal structures, to the largest of which is attached a wall running along the west bank of the river; this appears to have been one of the principal walls of the city; and between the two pyramids there seems to have been a gateway, or principal entrance from the water.

"The south wall runs at right-angles to the river, beginning with a range of steps about thirty feet high, and each step about eighteen inches square. At the south-east corner is a massive pyramidal structure, one hundred and twenty feet high, on the slope. On the right are other remains of terraces and pyramidal buildings, and here also was probably a gateway, by a passage about twenty feet wide, into a quadrangular area two hundred and fifty feet square, two sides of which are massive pyramids, one hundred and twenty feet high on the slope."

11. SCULPTURES.

"At the foot of these structures, and in different parts of the quadrangular area, are numerous remains of sculpture. In one place, near the corner from which the wall runs to the north, is a colossal monument richly sculptured, fallen and ruined. Behind it fragments of sculpture, thrown from their places by trees, are strewed, and lying loose on the side of the pyramid, from the base to the top; and among them our attention was forcibly arrested by rows of death's heads of gigantic proportions, still standing in their places about half way up the side of the pyramid; the effect was extraordinary. The engraving which follows, represents one of them.

"At the time of our visit, we had no doubt that these were death's-heads; but it has been suggested to me that the drawing is more like the skull of a monkey than that of a man. And, in connexion with this remark, I add what attracted our attention, though not so forcibly at the time. Among the fragments on this side, were the remains of a colossal ape or baboon, strongly resembling in outline and appearance the four monstrous animals which once stood in front, attached to the base of the obelisk of Luxor, now in



SCULPTURED HEADS, FROM THE RUINS OF COPAN.

Paris*, and which, under the name of Cynocephali, were worshipped at Thebes. This fragment was about six feet high. The head was wanting; the trunk lay on the side of the pyramid, and we rolled it down several steps, when it fell among a mass of stones, from which we could not disengage it. We had no such idea at the time, but it is not absurd to suppose the sculptured skulls to be intended for the heads of monkeys, and that those animals were worshipped as deities by the people who built Copan.

"Among the fragments lying on the ground, near this place, is a remarkable portrait, probably of some king, chieftain, or sage. The expression is noble and severe, and the whole character shows a close imitation of nature."

12. WRECKS OF IDOLATRY.

"A little to the northward of these, stands one of the columns or 'idols,' which give the peculiar character to the ruins of Copan. It stands with its face to the east, about six feet from the base of the pyramidal wall. It is thirteen feet in height, four feet in front, and three deep, sculptured on all four of its sides from the base to the top, and one of the richest and most elaborate specimens in the whole extent of the ruins, [a front view of this forms the frontispiece to this paper]. Originally it was painted, the marks of red colour being still distinctly visible. Before it, at a distance of about eight feet, is a large block of sculptured stone, which the Indians call an altar. The subject of the front is a full-length figure, the face wanting beard, and of a feminine cast, though the dress seems that of a man. On the two sides are rows of hieroglyphics, which probably recite the history of this mysterious personage.

"Following the wall as it turns again at a right angle to the east, we come to another monument or idol of the same size, and in many respects similar. The character of this image, as it stands at the foot of the pyramidal wall, with masses of fallen stone resting against its base, is grand, and it would be difficult to exceed the richness of the ornament and sharpness of the sculpture. This, too, was painted, and the red is still distinctly visible.

"The whole quadrangle is overgrown with trees, and interspersed with fragments of fine sculpture, particularly on the east side, and at the north-east corner is a narrow passage, which was probably a third gateway.

"On the right is a confused range of terraces running off into the forest, ornamented with death's-heads, some of which are still in position, and others lying about as they have fallen or been thrown down. Turning northward, the range on the left-hand continues a high, massive, pyramidal structure, with trees growing out of it to the very top. At a short distance is a detached pyramid, tolerably perfect, about fifty feet square, and thirty feet high. The range continues for a distance of about four hundred feet, decreasing somewhat in height, and along this there are but few remains of sculpture.

"The range of structures turns at right angles to the left and runs to the river, joining the other extremity of the wall at which we began our survey. The bank was elevated about thirty feet above the river, and had been protected by a wall of stone, most of which had fallen down. Among the fragments lying on the ground on this side is the portrait here given.

"The plan was complicated, and, the whole ground

* As it stands in Paris, these figures are wanting to make it complete as it stood at Thebes, the obelisk alone having been removed.

being overgrown with trees, difficult to make out. There was no entire pyramid, but, at most, two or three pyramidal sides, and these joined on to terraces, or other structures of the same kind. Beyond the wall of inclosure, were walls, terraces, and pyramidal elevations running off into the forest, which sometimes confused us. Probably the whole was not erected at the same time, but additions were made and statues erected by different kings, or perhaps in commemoration of important events in the history of the city. Along the whole line were ranges of steps with pyramidal elevations, probably once crowned with buildings or altars now ruined. All these steps and the pyramidal sides were painted, and the reader may imagine the effect when the whole country was clear of forest, and priest and people were ascending from the outside to the terraces, and thence to the holy places within, to pay their adoration in the temple.

"Within this inclosure are two rectangular court-yards, having ranges of steps ascending to terraces. The area of each is about forty feet above the river—or the larger and the most distant from the river the steps have all fallen, and constitute mere mounds. On one side at the foot of the pyramidal wall is another monument or idol; it is about the same height with the others, but differs in shape, being larger at the top than below. Its appearance and character are tasteful and pleasing, but the sculpture is in much lower relief; the expression of the hands is good, though somewhat formal. The back and sides are covered with hieroglyphics."

13. ALTARS.

"Near this is a remarkable altar, which, perhaps, presents as curious a subject of speculation as any monument in Copan. The altars, like the idols, are all of a single block of stone. In general they are not so richly ornamented, and are more faded and worn, or covered with moss: some were completely buried, and of others it was difficult to make out more than the form—all differed in fashion, and doubtless had some distinct and peculiar reference to the idols before which they stood. This stands on four globes cut out of the same stone: the sculpture is in bas-relief, and it is the only specimen of that kind of sculpture found in Copan, all the rest being in bold alto-relievo. It is six feet square and four feet high, and the top is divided into thirty-six tablets of hieroglyphics, which beyond doubt record some event in the history of the mysterious people who once inhabited the city. The lines of the hieroglyphics are still distinctly visible. Each side of the altar represents four individuals. On the west side are the two principal personages, chiefs or warriors, with their faces opposite each other, and apparently engaged in argument or negotiation. The other fourteen are divided into two equal parties, and seem to be following their leaders. Each of the figures is seated cross-legged in the oriental fashion, on a hieroglyphic which probably designates his name and office, or character, and on three of which the serpent forms part. Between the two principal personages is a remarkable cartouche, containing two hieroglyphics well preserved, which reminded us strongly of the Egyptian method of giving the names of the kings or heroes in whose honour monuments were erected. The head-dresses are remarkable for their curious and complicated forms; the figures have all breast-plates, and one of the principal characters holds in his hand an instrument, which may perhaps be considered a sceptre; each of the others holds an object which can be only a subject for

speculation and conjecture. It may be a weapon of war, and if so, it is the only thing of the kind found represented in Copan. In other countries, battle-scenes, warriors, and weapons of war are among the most prominent subjects of sculpture; and from the entire absence of them here, there is reason to believe that the people were not warlike, but peaceable, and easily subdued."

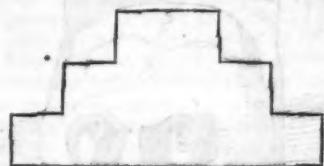
We should have been disposed to place more dependence upon this inference, if any groups of figures had been represented engaged in the arts of peace; but as neither Mr. Stephens nor Colonel Galindo mention any monument besides which represents other than individual figures, and those not distinguished by emblems designating any peculiar office or occupation, we do not see how any certain conclusion can be drawn from the absence of warlike subjects or signs. It is evident that the same altar, one of the sides of which is represented in the engraving in page 88, is alluded to by Colonel Galindo and Mr. Stephens, notwithstanding some discrepancies between the two accounts. Perhaps the feet used in the two measurements were those of different countries—Mr. Stephens of course uses the English foot. With regard to the hieroglyphics, the former states them to be forty-nine, that is, seven rows of seven; the latter, thirty-six, that is, six rows of six. In all cases of difference we should be inclined to prefer the authority of Mr. Stephens, because he seems to have examined the ruins with the greatest care; but there can be no doubt in the case of these hieroglyphics, because a copy of them forms one of the illustrations of his work. We now return to his survey.

14. THE CEIBA PYRAMID.

"The other court-yard is near the river. By cutting down the trees, we discovered the entrance to be on the north side, by a passage thirty feet wide and about three hundred feet long. On the right is a high range of steps rising to the terrace of the river wall. At the foot of this are six circular stones, from eighteen inches to three feet in diameter, perhaps once the pedestals of columns or monuments now fallen and buried. On the left-hand of the passage is a high pyramidal structure, with steps six feet high and nine feet broad, like the sides of one of the pyramids of Saccara, and one hundred and twenty-two feet high on the slope. The top has fallen, and has two immense ceiba trees growing out of it, the roots of which have thrown down the stones, and now bind the top of the pyramid. At the end of the passage is the area or court-yard, probably the great circus of Fuentes, but which, instead of being circular, is rectangular, one hundred and forty feet long and ninety broad, with steps on all the sides. This was probably the most holy place in the temple. Beyond doubt it had been the theatre of great events, and of imposing religious ceremonies; but what those ceremonies were, or who were the actors in them, or what had brought them to such a fearful close, were mysteries which it was impossible to fathom. There was no idol or altar, nor were there any vestiges of them. On the left, standing two-thirds of the way up the steps, is a gigantic head; it is moved a little from its place, and a portion of the ornament on one side has been thrown down some distance by the expansion of the trunk of a large tree. The head is about six feet high, and the style good. Like many of the others, with the great expansion of the eyes it seems intended to inspire awe. On either side of it, distant about thirty or forty feet, and rather lower down, are other fragments of colossal dimensions and good design, and at the foot are two colossal heads turned over and partly buried, well worthy the attention of future travellers and artists. The whole area is overgrown with trees, and encumbered with decayed vegetable matter, with fragments of curious sculpture protruding above the surface, which, probably, with many others completely buried, would be brought to light by digging.

"On the opposite side, parallel with the river, is a range of fifteen steps to a terrace, twelve feet wide, and then fifteen steps more to another terrace, twenty feet wide, extending to the river wall. On each side of the centre of the steps is a mound of ruins, apparently of a circular tower. About halfway up the steps on this side is a pit, five feet square, and seventeen feet deep, cased with stone. At the bottom is an opening leading into the chamber or sepulchral vault broken into by Colonel Galindo. Immediately above the pit which leads to this vault is a passage leading through the terrace to the river wall, from which as before men-

tioned, the ruins are sometimes called *Los Ventanas*, or the Windows. It is one foot eleven inches at the bottom, and one foot at the top, in this form,—



and barely large enough for a man to crawl through on his face. There were no remains of buildings."

15. MATERIALS AND INSTRUMENTS OF THE BUILDERS.

The mountainous range from which the stone was quarried is situated about two miles to the north of the river. The stone is a soft grit, the same as that of which the monuments are formed. Here were found many blocks, containing hard flint stones, which, for that reason, had been rejected after being quarried out. Smaller pieces of these are what Colonel Galindo alludes to as harder stones inserted in some of the obelisks. Where they occur on the surface of the monuments they are not carved like the softer stone, from which it may be inferred that the sculptor had no instruments hard enough to work them, and consequently that iron was unknown to the people who erected those structures. No metal has been discovered in the ruins, or at the quarries, but there have been found sharp and pointed instruments of chalye, or flint-stone, sufficiently hard to scratch into the softer grit-stone. It must have required no small practical knowledge of mechanics to transport the huge masses of stone over the irregular and broken surface which intervenes between the quarries and the city, to say nothing of raising blocks to the top of mountains two thousand feet high.

16. GENERAL EFFECT OF THE RUINS OF COPAN.

We shall now conclude this division of our subject with another extract from the work of Mr. Stephens.

"Of the moral effect of the monuments themselves, standing as they do in the depths of a tropical forest, silent and solemn, strange in design, excellent in sculpture, rich in ornament, different from the works of any other people, their uses and purposes, their whole history, so entirely unknown, with hieroglyphics explaining all, but perfectly unintelligible, I shall not pretend to convey any idea. Often the imagination was pained in gazing at them. The tone which pervades the ruins is that of deep solemnity. An imaginative mind might be infected with superstitious feelings. From constantly calling them by that name in our intercourse with the Indians, we regarded these solemn memorials as 'idols,' deified kings and heroes, objects of adoration and ceremonial worship. We did not find on the monuments or sculptured fragments any delineations of human or, in fact, of any other kind of sacrifice, but had no doubt that the large sculptured stone invariably found before each 'idol' was employed as a sacrificial altar. The form of sculpture most frequently met with was a death's head, sometimes as the principal ornament, and sometimes only accessory; whole rows of them on the outer wall, adding gloom to the mystery of the place, keeping before the eyes of the living death and the grave, and presenting the idea of a holy city—the Mecca or Jerusalem of an unknown people."

REMAINS OF QUIRIGUA.

In the neighbourhood of Copan are the remains of another ruined city. So little curiosity prevails among the inhabitants of the country on the subject, that very few know anything of the existence of such monuments, and the very persons to whom the tract of wild land on which these are situated belongs, had never visited them until induced to accompany Mr. Catherwood.

"On a fine morning, after a heavy rain, they set off for the ruins. After a ride of about half an hour, over an execrable road, they reached *Los Amatis*, a village pleasantly situated on the bank of the Motagua river, and elevated about thirty feet. The river was here about two hundred feet wide, and fordable in every part except a few deep holes. Generally it did not exceed three feet in depth,

and in many places was not so deep; but below it was said to be navigable to the sea for boats not drawing more than three feet water. They embarked in two canoes dug out of cedar trees, and proceeded down the river for a couple of miles, where they took on board a negro guide.

"After proceeding two or three miles further, and passing through two corn fields, the travellers entered a forest of large cedar and mahogany trees. The path was exceedingly soft and wet, and covered with decayed leaves, and the heat very great. Continuing through the forest toward the north-east, in three-quarters of an hour they reached the foot of a pyramidal structure like those at Copan, with the steps in some places perfect. They ascended to the top, about twenty-five feet, and descending by steps on the other side, at a short distance beyond came to a colossal head two yards in diameter, almost buried by an enormous tree, and covered with moss. Near it was a large altar, so covered with moss that it was impossible to make anything out of it. The two are within an inclosure.

"Retracing their steps across the pyramidal structure, and proceeding to the north about three or four hundred yards, they reached a collection of monuments of the same general character with those at Copan, but twice or three times as high.

"The first is about twenty feet high, five feet six inches on two sides, and two feet eight on the other two. The front represents the figure of a man, well preserved; the back that of a woman, much defaced. The sides are covered with hieroglyphics in good preservation, but in low relief, and of exactly the same style as those at Copan. Another is twenty-three feet out of the ground, with figures of men on the front and back, and hieroglyphics in low relief on the sides, and surrounded by a base projecting fifteen or sixteen feet from it.

"At a short distance, standing in the same position as regards the points of the compass, is an obelisk or carved stone, twenty-six feet out of the ground, and probably six or eight feet under. It is leaning twelve feet two inches out of the perpendicular, and seems ready to fall, which is probably prevented only by a tree that has grown up against it and the large stones around the base. The side toward the ground represents the figure of a man, very perfect and finely sculptured. The upper side seemed the same, but was so hidden by vegetation as to make it uncertain.

"A statue ten feet high is lying on the ground, covered with moss and herbage, and another about the same size lies with its face upward. There are four others erect, about twelve feet high, but not in a very good state of preservation, and several altars so covered with herbage that it was difficult to ascertain their exact form. One of them is round, and situated on a small elevation with a circle formed by a wall of stones. In the centre of the circle, reached by descending very narrow steps, is a large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics, covered with vegetation, and supported on what seemed to be two colossal heads. Besides these they counted thirteen fragments, and doubtless many others may yet be discovered. At some distance from them is another monument, nine feet out of the ground, and probably two or three under, with the figure of a woman on the front and back, the sides richly ornamented, but without hieroglyphics.

"The general character of the ruins is the same as at Copan. The monuments are much larger, but they are sculptured in much lower relief, less rich in design, and more faded and worn, being probably of a much older date.

"Of one thing there is no doubt: a large city once stood there; its name is lost, its history unknown; and except for a notice taken from Mr. C.'s notes, and inserted after his visit, by the proprietors of the land in a Guatimala paper, which found its way into Europe, no account of its existence was ever before published. For centuries it has lain as completely buried as if covered by the lava of Vesuvius. Every traveller from Yzabel to Guatimala has passed within three hours' journey of it, and yet there it lay, like the rock-built city of Edom, unvisited, unsought and utterly unknown."

RUINS OF SANTA CRUZ DE QUICHE.

The kingdom of Quiché and its capital Utatlan are spoken of by the historians of the Spanish conquests in America as powerful and opulent. It is said that the king opposed the invaders at the head of seventy thousand men. Some vestiges still remain, but as they have been less secluded from the step of man than the monuments we have spoken

of above, not being like them surrounded by dense forests, but having villages in their immediate neighbourhood, so they have suffered greater injury. There are some remains of a fortress built on an eminence, which was apparently of considerable strength. The palace is completely destroyed, the materials having been used in building the present village. In part, however, the floor and fragments of the partition walls remain. The floor is of a cement which has resisted the floods of the rainy seasons during hundreds of years, and is still as hard as stone.

RITES OF THE WESTERN PAGANS.

"The most important part remaining of these ruins," we quote from Mr. Stephens, "is called El Sacrificatorio, or the place of sacrifice. It is a quadrangular stone structure, sixty-six feet on each side at the base, and rising in a pyramidal form to the height, in its present condition, of thirty-three feet. On three sides there is a range of steps in the middle, each step seventeen inches high, and but eight inches on the upper surface, which makes the range so steep that in the ascending some caution is necessary. At the corners are four buttresses of cut stone, diminishing in size from the line of the square, and apparently intended to support the structure. On the side facing the west there are no steps, but the surface is smooth and covered with stucco, gray with long exposure. By breaking a little at the corners, we saw that there were different layers of stucco, doubtless put on at different times, and all had been ornamented with painted figures. In one place we made out part of the body of a leopard, well drawn and coloured.

"The top of the Sacrificatorio is broken and ruined, but there is no doubt that it once supported an altar for those sacrifices of human beings which struck even the Spaniards with horror. It was barely large enough for the altar and officiating priests, and the whole was in full view of the people at the foot.

"The barbarous ministers carried up the victim entirely naked, and extended him upon the altar, pointing out the idol to which the sacrifice was made, that the people might pay their adorations. The altar had a convex surface, and the body of the victim lay arched, with the trunk elevated, and the head and feet depressed. Four priests held the legs and arms, and another kept his head firm with a wooden instrument made in the form of a coiled serpent, so that he was prevented from making the least movement. The head priest then approached, and with a knife made of flint cut an aperture in the breast, and tore out the heart, which, yet palpitating, he offered to the sun, and then threw it at the feet of the idol. If the idol was gigantic and hollow, it was usual to introduce the heart of the victim into his mouth with a golden spoon. If the victim was a prisoner of war, as soon as he was sacrificed, they cut off the head to preserve the skull, and threw the body down the steps, when it was taken up by the officer or soldier to whom the prisoner had belonged, and carried to his house to be dressed and served up as an entertainment for his friends. If he was not a prisoner of war, but a slave purchased for the sacrifice, the proprietor carried off the body for the same purpose."

Some images of terra cotta have been found in these ruins, as hard as stone, highly polished, and of good workmanship.

RUINS OF GUEGUETINANGO.

This ruined city, situated like the last-mentioned in the ancient kingdom of Quiché, was in a like manner, built upon an eminence surrounded by a ravine.

"The general character of the ruins," says Mr. Stephens, "is the same as at Quiché, but the hand of destruction has fallen upon it still more heavily. The whole is a confused heap of grass-grown fragments. The principal remains are two pyramidal structures. One of them measures at the base one hundred and two feet; the steps are four feet high and seven feet deep, making the whole height twenty-eight feet. They are not of cut stone as at Copan, but of rough pieces cemented with lime, and the whole exterior was formerly coated with stucco and painted. On the top is a small square platform, and at the base lies a long slab of rough stone, apparently hurled down from the top; perhaps the altar on which victims were extended for sacrifice.

"The owner of the ground, whose house was hard by, and who accompanied us to the ruins, told us that he had bought the land from the Indians, and that, for some time after his purchase, he was annoyed by their periodical visits to celebrate some of their ancient rites on the top of this

structure. This was continued until he whipped two or three of the principal men and drove them away.

"At the foot of the structure was a vault, faced with cut stone, in which were found a collection of bones and a terra cotta vase, then in his possession. The vault was not long enough for the body of a man extended, and the bones must have been separated before they were placed there."

TIERRA DI GUERRA, OR VERA PAZ.

Mr. Stephens visited also the site of the ancient city of Patinamit, or Tecpan Guatimala. Fuentes speaks of the remains of magnificent structures in this place, but there are now only mounds of ruins. There are some fragments of sculptured stones, but so worn as to be undistinguishable.

At Santa Cruz del Quiché he met with a priest who told him that four leagues from Copan, in the province of Vera Paz, was another ancient city of considerable size, deserted and desolate, with remains of magnificent palaces and other edifices in a state of comparatively good preservation.

"But," says Mr. Stephens, "the padre told us more; something that increased our excitement to the highest pitch. On the other side of the great traversing range of Cordilleras lies the district of Vera Paz, once called Tierra di Guerra, or Land of War, from the warlike character of its aboriginal inhabitants. Three times the Spaniards were driven back in their attempts to conquer it. Las Cases, vicar of the convent of the Dominican order in the city of Guatimala, mourning over the bloodshed caused by what was called converting the Indians to Christianity, wrote a treatise to prove that Divine Providence had instituted the preaching of the Gospel as the means of conversion to the Christian faith; that war could not with justice be made upon those who had never committed any aggressions against Christians; and that to harass and destroy the Indians was to prevent the accomplishing of this desired object. This doctrine he preached from the pulpit, and enforced in private assemblies. He was laughed at, ridiculed, and sneeringly advised to put his theory in practice. Undisturbed by this mockery, he accepted the proposal, choosing as the field of his operations the unconquerable district called Tierra di Guerra, and made an arrangement that no Spaniards should be permitted to reside in that country for five years. This agreed upon, the Dominicans composed some hymns in the Quiché language, describing the creation of the world, the fall of Adam, the redemption of mankind, and the principal events of the life, passion, and death of our Saviour. These were learned by some Indians, who traded with the Quichés, and a principal cacique of the country, afterwards called Don Juan, having heard them sung, asked those who had repeated them to explain in detail the meaning of things so new to him. The Indians excused themselves, saying that they could only be explained by the fathers who had taught them. The cacique sent one of his brothers with many presents, to entreat that they would come and make him acquainted with what was contained in the songs of the Indian merchants. A single Dominican friar returned with the ambassador, and the cacique, having been instructed in the new faith, burned his idols, and preached Christianity to his own subjects. Las Cases and another associate followed, and thus was effected by men of peace what the Spanish arms failed to do; namely, the bringing a portion of the Land of War to the Christian faith. The rest of the Tierra di Guerra never was conquered; and at this

day the north-eastern section, bounded by the range of the Cordilleras and the State of Chiapas, is occupied by Candones or unbaptized Indians, who live as their fathers did, acknowledging no submission to the Spaniards, and the government of Central America does not pretend to exercise any control over them."

AN UNTOUCHED CITY.

"But the thing that roused us was the assertion by the padre that, four days on the road to Mexico, on the other side of the Great Sierra, was a living city, large and populous, occupied by Indians, precisely in the same state as before the discovery of America. He had heard of it many years before at the village of Chajul, and was told by the villagers that from the topmost ridge of the sierra this city was distinctly visible. He was then young, and with much labour climbed to the naked summit of the Sierra, from which, at the height of ten or twelve thousand feet, he looked over an immense plain, extending to Yucatan and the Gulf of Mexico, and saw, at a distance, a large city spread over a great space, and with turrets white and glittering in the sun. The traditional account of the Indians of Chajul is, that no white man has ever reached this city; that the inhabitants speak the Maya language, are aware that a race of strangers has conquered the whole country around, and murder any white man who attempts to enter their territory. They are said to have no coin or other circulating medium; no horses, cattle, mules, or any domestic animals, except fowls, and the cocks they keep under-ground, to prevent their crowing being heard.

"There was a wild novelty—something that touched the imagination—in every step of our journey in that country. The old padre, in the deep stillness of the dimly-lighted convent, with his long black coat like a robe, and his flashing eye, called up an image of the bold and resolute priests who accompanied the army of the conquerors; and as he drew a map on the table, and pointed out the Sierra to the top of which he had climbed, and the position of the mysterious city, the interest awakened in us was the most thrilling I ever experienced. One look at that city were worth ten years of an every-day life. If he be right, a place is left where Indians and an Indian city exist, as Cortez and Alvarado found them; there are living men who can go to Copan and read the inscriptions on its monuments. No subject more exciting and attractive presents itself to my mind, and the deep impression of that night will never be effaced.

"Can it be true? Being now in my sober senses, I do verily believe there is much ground to suppose that what the padre told us is authentic. That the region referred to does not acknowledge the government of Guatimala, has never been explored, and that no white man ever pretends to enter it, I am satisfied. From other sources we heard that a large ruined city was visible from that sierra, and we were told of another person who had climbed to the top, but, on account of the dense cloud resting upon it, had been unable to see anything. At all events, the belief at the village of Chajul is general, and a curiosity is roused that burns to be satisfied."

We have now finished that part of our task which relates to the States of Central America, and propose in a future Supplement to give some account of Palenque, and other deserted cities in Mexico.



SCULPTURE ON AN ALTAR IN THE RUINS OF COPAN.